

Topic Four – Effective Career and Performance Development



Coaching, Evaluating and Delivering Constructive Feedback – Learning Series

We are pleased to bring you ***“Effective Career and Performance Development;”*** the fourth in a series of communications that discuss the value that coaching brings to your management practice and team leadership. The content presented will address the formal performance management process, and your role – as a Manager or Supervisor– in helping your employees get the most from the experience.

To reference previous topics, please click on the Coaching Series Home link located in the Quick Links section of this web page.

Thanks for all you do.

Overview: Effective Career and Performance Development

Whether you are using the EPRS (Employee Performance Review System) or ACES (Achievement Competency and Enhancement System) performance evaluation tool, the annual Commonwealth performance review process is an opportunity to set direction for your department and your individual employees (also called “employees”) for the coming year. This process includes three phases: goal setting, mid-year review, and year-end assessment. You can find more information about EPRS, ACES, and the performance review process in the following resources:

- [Manager Handbook](#)
- [EPRS Guide](#)
- [EPRS Supervisor Guide](#)

These tools present the employee’s job description as a series of duties or competencies (or as strategic objectives when working in ACES) to be rated. While using these tools can be fairly straightforward, it is the conversation around the review that should be the most valuable for you and your employees.

When you deliver annual reviews to your employees, be sure to take the time to discuss their overall performance, the criteria for each job duty or competency, and plans for the coming year (Performance Planning). You are responsible for adjusting the performance criteria if the job has evolved or plans for the coming year will impact the role of the employee. This process is referred to as amending the EPRS form. In addition, you may need to complete a Form 30 to define the duties and responsibilities of the position (see the EPRS Supervisor Guide for more information).

Goal setting is an opportunity to incorporate the professional goals of the employee in the plans for the coming year. If discussions reveal that he or she is interested in a particular type of work, you can include development opportunities related to that kind of work in the list of job duties for the coming year. Note that the job description might need updating which could impact job classification.

Here is an example of how a manager could adjust an employee's performance evaluation.

Florence manages six staff members in the Health Care Resources (HCR) unit. Her unit's projects are funded by state and federal grants. It's sometimes difficult to assign work to her staff due to the fact that occasionally funding can be reallocated to another work unit and consequently a project in HCR will be stalled or eliminated. This makes the performance evaluation process especially difficult for Florence. While everyone on her staff has a current Form 30 in place, the EPRS and ACES process does not always reflect the reality of the work a staff member is doing. Florence decides it is best to address this issue with her HR office as she is uncomfortable reviewing her employees for projects that no longer exist or have been put on hold. The HR representative informs Florence that it is acceptable to add or subtract job duties or strategic objectives to an employee's performance evaluation. If projects have been eliminated or added, it is necessary for this to be reflected in the performance evaluation process. A written document must be drafted addressing the amendment to the performance evaluation and then the manager/supervisor and employee must sign the amended performance evaluation. Florence now has the tools she needs to effectively and realistically review her staff.

If you have already engaged in coaching practices with your employees, this process and the conversations surrounding the formal review will be a lot easier. There should be no surprises during the formal review and you will already have a good idea about the employee's professional goals and how their goals align with your departmental goals.

Remember while goal setting with Managers or Supervisors, it is important to include goals around being an effective Manager/Supervisor.

Benefits of Effective Career and Performance Development

The benefits of effective career and performance development are outlined below:

- Adds value to the performance evaluation process for your employees
- Assists in laying out a roadmap of goals for your team for the coming year
- Employees get a view into development opportunities
- Reduces the stress around providing feedback for your employees

Keys to Effective Career and Performance Development

The following are some key questions to ask yourself about performance evaluation to best prepare for your employee's formal performance review process:

- **Are the job duties or competencies still applicable?**
 - In the course of the previous year, the essential functions of the role being reviewed may have changed with a shift in priorities or the introduction of a new project. Make changes to these as necessary using what you know about departmental plans and employee goals for the coming year.
- **Are the job duties and performance criteria for each job duty or competency well-written?**
 - Job duties should be written as full-sentence statements including an action verb and the task to be accomplished. Criteria descriptions are used to determine how your employee's performance of the job duty will be measured and should be concrete and accurately reflect the expectations or deliverables essential for accomplishing each goal. Remember that "measurable" does not necessarily imply "graded" or "scored," but you should have tangible or observable results in mind when identifying outcomes. The SMART acronym is useful to support the development of Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound goals.
- **Examples of poorly written and acceptable goals are below:**
 - Poor #1: Employee is responsible for distributing mail to staff on a daily basis.
 - Acceptable #1: Deliver mail to employees each day by picking up mail from mail room by 8:00 A.M. and distribute it to all staff members by 9:00 A.M. to ensure that responses can be mailed to permit applicants and other regulated community parties by 3:00 P.M. the same day.
 - Poor #2: Resolves website inquiries from permit applicants in a timely manner.

- Acceptable #2: Resolves website inquiries from permit applicants by researching issues presented in the inquiries in order to give the applicant correct information regarding the permit process and required documentation that must accompany all permit applications. Targets 8 (business) hour turnaround time for most inquiries.
 - Poor #3: Collects overdue payments for enforcement cases.
 - Acceptable #3: Collects overdue enforcement payments by researching enforcement action history and documenting all actions taken on the facility/property in order to enforce the contract and collect payment. Cases should be resolved within 30 days of receipt.
- **Have you given your employee opportunity for input into the criteria?**
 - Preparing for the coming year should be a collaborative effort between coach and employee. A leading practice for goal setting includes assigning development of the first draft of the job duties and performance criteria to your employee. You will then have an opportunity to modify and refine as needed.
 - **Do the listed job duties include opportunities for development of the employee?**
 - Take the time to discuss with your employee upcoming opportunities to get involved with projects that align with their career goals. For example, if you know your employee is interested in learning a new skill or contributing to an ongoing effort, you may want to include a job duty that incorporates participation in a project or task force related to that interest.
 - **Does your employee know how to get to the next level?**
 - Whether your employee is seeking a promotion, movement to a new kind of role, or simply an expansion of skills, part of your role as a coach is to make clear how your employee can reach the next level. If he or she seeks experience in a new area, be on the lookout for projects, research or working groups in which your employee can participate. Also consider opportunities outside of your Agency in which your employee can participate to grow their skills. For example, required or recommended certifications, inter-Agency interaction (e.g., serving on an interview team or procurement team), joining professional organizations, and attending conferences. Be mindful of how the employee's interests can benefit your department overall, even if they don't fit neatly into a job description. Effective coaches understand that getting the most from an employee's talent and interests costs the Commonwealth less over time.

Next Steps

Activity: To support your understanding of the competencies referenced in EPRS and ACES, please review the following job aid:

- [Commonwealth Employee Development Plan](#)

Coming Next: *The EARN Feedback Process for Positive and Negative Situations* can be a method for providing positive and negative feedback and is the next topic in this series. It will provide you with the necessary steps and strategies required to provide constructive feedback.